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Statement submitted by AIM Education & Research Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

An effective social protection system must not only be able to protect basic means of livelihood of its population, but should also provide good healthcare facilities, sanitation, water, energy, Infrastructure, education and training. Whether it is an underdeveloped, developing or developed economy of the world, in this context, each country should have a social protection system in place whereby implementation depends on the feasibility of such social protection systems which primarily rely on the political scenario and financial conditions prevailing in different nations.

In the process of developing different skills reducing poverty and inequality is an imperative. This is possible by building a resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable Industrialization and fostering innovation in technology. Focus should be on affordable and equitable access to all the natural and other resources available. The emphasis should be to move from agrarian based society to an industrial one.

When both men and women get educated and trained in diverse fields of activities only then can they become self-sufficient and self-reliant. If social protection systems fulfil the needs of the people, the economic growth shall accelerate. Governments of different nations need to formulate policies for social protection systems to work effectively and tailor made to suit the needs of the population.

No social protection system can work effectively and efficiently until and unless necessary funds are allocated for such purposes. Normally any country which has a robust collection of taxes is in a better position to spend for social protection schemes. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also contribute to this cause in addition to philanthropists, individuals and corporate houses. Many countries who invest in social protection systems are more successful economically. It is considered an investment in people and it provides help for self-development, thereby contributing to social growth, which is increasingly important for stability and peace in many countries.

Social security is not just a human right, systems that provide social protection lay the foundation for pro-poor and sustainable poverty reduction and they are key to attaining the millennium development goals of the United Nations. Statistics by the international labour organization have confirmed that basic protection is affordable, even in low-income countries, by setting up a sustainable system of social security. It is not just a matter of money.

The widespread incidence of HIV/AIDS and the large percentage of non-formal labour, for example, pose special challenges in developing countries. The international community has recognized the importance of social protection for sustainable poverty reduction and development. International organization such as the United Nations and the World Bank along with the G8, the EU and other countries have shown their willingness to step up support to developing countries and emerging economies in setting up appropriate systems to be adopted. Many nations share their experience with partner countries and assist them in implementing suitable and sustainable solutions.

Many developing and more advanced countries have already begun to establish social protection systems. Others are currently looking for advise on developing sustainable systems suited to their needs. These also include the increase provision of micro insurance and the extension of basic social protection programs. Basic social protection programs are playing an increasingly important role currently especially in context of the global food crisis. Above all, they help vulnerable sections of the

population, such as women, children and disabled or older people. Social protection for older people also poses a future challenge for developing and more advanced countries whose societies also face rapid demographic change.

Social health insurance provides fair, financed and equitable access to public health services for the whole population. Everybody must pay what they can afford; social capital is redistributed from the healthy to the sick, from the younger to the older generation from the employed to the jobless and from the better off to the more needy. An effective social protection system should lay emphasis on the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and provide affordable health care to one and all.

Access to public services would mean extending social health insurance to the informal sector. People outside the formal sector now, such as pensioners, the disabled and the poor are medically insured as well. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education shall promote lifelong learning opportunities for one and all. Both men and women should be given tertiary and technical education to strengthen their future.

Infrastructure is the set of structural elements that support day to day function and influences the direction of human society. Sustainable infrastructure refers to the designing, building and operating of these structural elements in ways that do not diminish the social economic and ecological processes required to maintain human equity, diversity and the functionality of natural systems.

Infrastructure is critical to sustainable community development; our future and well-being depends on a well-defined sustainable infrastructure. The infrastructure that is built today will shape tomorrow's communities. There are five key infrastructure areas that can be crucial to sustainable development: transportation, energy, land use planning, waste management and governance.

Equality, also known as sexual equality, is the state of equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making, and the state of valuing different behaviours, aspirations and needs, equally, regardless of gender.

Gender equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs.

On a global scale, achieving gender equality also requires eliminating harmful practices against women and girls, including sex trafficking, femicide, wartime sexual violence and other forms of oppression tactics. Despite many international agreements affirming their human rights, women are still much more likely than men to be poor and illiterate. They have less access to property ownerships, credit, training and employment. They are far less likely than men to be politically active and far more likely to be victims of domestic violence.

Empowerment of women and girls is possible only if certain concrete measures are taken by providing clean water as girls in poor communities often miss school because of lack of clean water which they have to fetch after walking long distances everyday that is often dirty and dangerous to their health.

Millions of girls are subjected to abuse, child labour, trafficking, child marriage and other offences. Hence more and more women and girls need to be protected by

equipping them with skills and by offering training, education, counselling, medical care, small business loans and other programs that reach out to women and girls and help to end gender based violence. There are millions of girls who are below the poverty line and are therefore vulnerable to teen violence and other crimes. The educated women should reach out and try to influence the life of young girls in their respective communities by volunteering as a tutor or mentor.

Micro loans can be offered to hardworking and zealous women entrepreneurs, as this will enable them to secure their future and the funds can be recycled again and again to help more people and make a visible impact.

Nearly 2.6 million new-born around the world die every year due to ignorance and lack of knowledge. Similarly, millions of women die annually due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Most of the deaths in children can be curtailed or totally stopped by proper counselling as most of them die from preventable and treatable causes such as pneumonia, diarrhea and malaria.

Women empowerment means giving equal opportunities to women not only at home but also at workplaces and neighbourhoods. Suitable measures must be taken to encourage women to do what they have been abstained from doing over the years and give them the respect which they rightly deserve and thus restore their dignity.